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ABSTRACT

The main objective of this paper is to examine the issue of matching the school curriculum with the needs of students, without the negative effects of testing. The paper next discusses curricular incompatibilities. It is only by carefully designing, implementing, and evaluating instructional programs that the negative effects of ability grouping, student misplacement, and resegregation can be avoided. Some curricular recommendations which would facilitate the development of the match between the school curriculum and students' needs are made. For example, instructional systems must be designed to stress the a priori importance of each student learner's characteristics, when selecting the objectives, materials, procedures, and time parameters. Educational leaders must adopt the ideology of acting in the spirit of noblesse oblige, thus assuming responsibility for the maintenance of high quality education and proper community, political, and educational stability. Curriculum experiences and students must be looked at on equal terms and mutually supportive of each other. Educators must improve the quality of education where students are situated; i.e., segregated and desegregated settings. Educational leaders should not become discouraged or cynical. (RM)

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CURRICULUM AND STUDENT MATCHING WITHOUT THE NEGATIVE EFFECTS OF TESTING[1]

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> ...there has been...the American dream, that dream of a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for every man, with opportunity for each according to his ability or achievement. It is a difficult dream for the European upper classes to interpret adequately, and too many of us ourselves have grown weary and mistrustful of it. It is not a dream of motor cars and high wages merely, but a dream of a social order in which each man and each woman shall be able to attain to the fullest stature of which they are innately capable, and be recognized by others for what they are, regardless of the fortuitous circumstances of birth or position (Adams, p. 374).

Curriculum and Student Matching Without the Negative Effects of Testing

Introduction

Education assumes change. Change is at best, difficult in any society or institution, especially educational institutions. For example, the development of mandatory education in the United States has been a great achievement--but has not eliminated all the problems associated with learning. The current discussion to have the funding of various federal initiatives become the responsibility of the state has created much confusion. As a result, the immediate future appears to be murky relative to whether there will emerge, a "goodness of fit" in terms of a successful nexus development between not only the Federal and State, but more importantly, between the curriculum and the student learner.

Further, in light of rapidly diminishing resources at the local level, it remains unclear, whether efforts will either continue or develop, in order to make this match a reality. Certainly, the aforementioned has an impact

on all students. However, that impact is even more severe when one examines the effect of education on disadvantaged students.

The main objective of this paper is to examine the issue of matching the school curriculum with the needs of students, without the negative effects of testing. More specifically, the writers will address this issue from a social science perspective by discussing the following. First, providing a historical backdrop of education in America; second, analyzing the conceptual basis of curricular incompatibilities extending to what needs to be done in terms of developing a viable nexus between curriculum and students needs; third, highlighting some curricular recommendations which would facilitate the development of this match; fourth, giving some direction in terms of what to expect during the remainder of the decade of the 1980's, if we do not exercise considerable judgement now, and in the immediate future; and fifth, providing some conclusions with respect to curriculum-student matching in relation to the negative effects of testing.

Historical Backdrop

Early History

Essentially, the history of education in this nation, having dealt rather exclusively with public schooling, began with the early 19th century. Although the United States was principally an English-speaking country, the initial immigrants were from a similar socio-economic class emanately from the British Isles during the 17th through the early 19th century. Interestingly, much of this history has not dealt with the immigrant to any great degree. The point is that some of the rudimentary beginnings of education being provided to disadvantaged individuals was from the outset of educational history; no less a

somewhat fragmentary genesis of urban education in the United States, since many early settlements were extensive in places like New York City. These settlements provided havens for the influx of sizeable numbers of non-English language and cultural groups. Subsequently, during the later part of the 19th century, this incursion of non-English speaking people, probably has had the most impact on American education. Cubberly (1919) in his historical treatise of education wrote:

> All were from race stock not very different from our own, and all possessed courage, initiative, intelligence, adaptability, and self-reliance to a great degree. The willingness, good nature and executive qualities of the Irish; the intellectual thoroughness of the Germans; the respect for the law and order of the English; and the thrift, sobriety, and industry of the Scandinavians have been good additions to our national life (p. 37).

Accordingly, (Sowell, 1981) states that, "to seek for cause and effect in history is very different from seeking for justification and condemnation. Causal and moral analyses are each difficult enough without being confused with each other" (p. 273).

But the tide of events was soon to change. After 1822, a discernable change occurred relative to immigrants' characteristics being in diametric opposition to their predecessors. It was at this juncture that public education became much more difficult to provide.

It is instructive to point out that much of those observed disparaging characteristics during the later part of the 19th century have been said to mirror what is being said about Blacks, Hispanics, and low-income Anglos who are inhabiting our cities. Conversely, the grandchildren of the 1880s and 1890s Europeans are now prospering in suburbia.

This rather early cursory history of the evolvement of groups in the United States, is linked with the annals of the conventional blueprint of schooling in this nation. Thus, the conceptual basis of "disadvantagement," becomes one that is closely akin to examining such peoples in this country. Additionally, it has been documented in history that much of early American educational history is often a history of schooling in the urban areas. However, certain generalizations can be made, that to some degree all peoples of early America were disadvantaged, but not all were impoverished in the economic sense.

Recent History

One of the most rudimentary principles of Constitutional law in the United States was abrogated with the clarion decision in Brown v. Board of Education (347 U.S. 483) on May 17, 1954. The winds of change began to emerge, highlighted by an increasing feeling of educational optimism for disadvantaged groups. The chronicle of legal history, documents Amendment emasculation in the Supreme Court rulings of 1873, 1976, 1885 and the zenith of segregation law in 1896. Although slow in coming, nonetheless there was a significant shift (albeit, after decades of stagnation), in the social, political and educational mood of the nation. At this juncture in the litany of educational history, we began to see those "rays of change" which impacted the curricular/instructional offerings in the public schools. As this process began to unfold, it soon became apparent that the task would require multi-level action in a simultaneous fashion.

In the aftermath of Brown curricular aspects of desegregation needed to be impacted, as well as the tangible factors of facilities, student movement and etc., at a time when the masses were bent on glorifying the sanctity of

the "melting pot" ideology. Implicit in this is unless curricular relevance in light of disadvantaged student educational needs were addressed, then desegregation/integration and its related principles would not be served (Gaye, 1979).

Outside the school indicators of social change were also very apparent, with various Civil Rights Legislation being enacted.

History, seemingly reinforces that espoused classical homily of American folk wisdom; namely "Education is the way up." This has been especially true for disadvantaged groups. Even today, educational attainment is the one best predictor of adult success in various occupations (Sewell & Houser, 1975). Historical documentation also supports the belief that many disadvantaged groups have tenaciously held to the words that through education, one would gain economically and socially, and subsequent equality. Thus, reiterating Emile Dirk-Heim's contention that institutions can and do shape our behavior in predictable ways.

But this ray of hope is perceived by many disadvantaged individuals as only a partial truth without necessarily being qualified. Thus, culminating in a somewhat unsavory attitude toward education, due to recent research findings on school effectiveness (Clark, Lott, McCarthy, 1980; Cohen, 1980; Coleman, Hoffer & Kilgore, 1981).

> The middle-class fourth of the black population often written about as "burgeoning," has in fact not grown in a decade, and the fourth living in poverty has not shrunk. But the rate of black unemployment has doubled since 1969, to 13.5 percent ...and the number of unemployed Blacks has nearly tripled, to 1.4 million. The rage runs devastatingly high among black teenagers; a new generation is coming of riot age with short work, few skills, stunted hopes-and no memory whatever of the victories so painfully won by their parents (Goldman, Borger, Shannon, Foote, & Kirsch, 1980).

This somewhat strictured interpretation tends to define the aspirations of individuals participating in the public education enterprise (Friedenberg, 1934).

Upon further note, one finds that an underlying assumption is that schools in many ways are institutions protecting the status quo, reflective of stultifying uniformity, and that this attitude within the schools themselves is socially destructive and is problematic with respect to intra-organizational change (Kozol, 1967; Sarason, 1971; Bowles, 1972; & Rothbart, 1970).

For many disadvantaged groups, this prior gleam of hope, of the fifties and sixties, that meaningful change would occur wrought with positive educational experiences had been replaced by disillusionment, and disenchantment; a dream deferred (Taylor, 1979).

Curricular Incompatibilities

> In no other species are the differences between individuals so great as in the human race...On top of all the temperamental and anatomical differences...are differences in biochemical make-up and differences in general ability and special gifts-differences so great that they can almost be regarded as differences, not in degree, but in kind. To herd all these dissimilar creatures into one classroom and to subject them all to the same kind of intellectual, emotional, and ethical training seems, on the face of it, absurd...(Huxley, 1967).

Curriculum matching has long been a goal of the educational enterprise in these United States. Various attempts operationalized through processes such as mastery learning based on principles outlined by Bloom (1976), individualized instruction, individually guided education, non-graded schools, continuous progress, to name a few, have been based on the assumption that the needs of the student are identified, considering those things that are most appropriate

for the individual in school and society, and building curriulum around those needs. It appears that, over the last few decades, education has moved in this direction, but no definitive strategy has been consistently applied, which would meet the needs of disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged students.

Some pessimists suggest that our system of education only lends lip service to this ideal, resulting in much being lost between the lip and the instructional setting. For a moment let us assume that the problem is not with the child but with the lack of a curriculum match. Operating from a research mode, logic would suggest certain things.

When we as social scientists conduct research on problems facing education, i.e., curricular incompatibility, a certain dilemma confronts us in terms of justifying the problem. In the selection of problematic educational phenomenon, researchers offer only their view of what is wrong and by implication, what should be done to correct the problem. Inevitably, this process involves the making of value judgements in matters of great education import, which in some instances is antithetical to the conduct of scientific inquiry. By inserting an introductory statement, we attempt to justify the parameters of our research. This posture decreases the charges of bias while enhancing our claim to scientific forte. This has been demonstrated by a number of social scientists (Mills, 1963; Walker, 1936; Merton & Nisbet, 1961).

What appears to be essential is the accurate identification of the problem and not just the value judgements. Mitchell (1982) in speaking of social change, suggests that "perhaps we are naive to have supposed that educational theories formulated within the context of academic scholarship are ultimately translated into social policies that will substantially improve the quality of life for people in this country who are poor, oppressed, and ethnically

different" (p.). Likewise, close attention must be paid to the "individual deficit" theory advanced by Ryan (1971 & 1976). Although the Ryan theory addresses disadvantageness in general, the principles obviously are applicable to students in the schools.

Numerous research studies (Henry, 1963; Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968; Rist, 1970; Rosenfeld, 1971' & Valentine, 1971) illustrate that the educator is most central in the process of educational intervention. One focused analysis would be on a theory of incompatibility which attributes the poor performance of disadvantaged students in schools, to the variance between the characteristics of the child and that of the general instructional programs devised for the typical child (Cardenas & Cardenas, 1977).

In the Cardenas-Cardenas Theory of Incompatibilities, there is deliberateness in attempting not to criticize the curriculum when used with students for whom it was designed. Equally important, is that no criticism is made of minority or disadvantaged childrens' distinguishing traits. The Theory has two basic principles which are crucial for an understanding of its educational implications;

1. Interrelatedness and interdependence; and
2. Adaptability

These, together with their five general categories of poverty, culture, language, mobility, and societal perceptions form the basis for subsequent development of a comprehensive educational curriculum. (See Figure 1)

In their research sponsored by the United States Office of Education, the Cardenas identified over forty incompatibilities and grouped them into these five areas. This developmental matrix illustrates the interrelationship of

Figure 1

THE DEVELOPMENTAL MATRIX

ELEMENTS OF AN EDUCATIONAL PLAN

AREAS OF INCOMPATIBILITIES	PHILOSOPHIES	POLICIES	SCOPE & SEQUENCE	CURRICULUM	STAFFING	CO-CURRICULUM	STUDENT SERVICES	NON-INSTRUCTIONAL NEEDS	COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT	EVALUATION
POVERTY										
CULTURE										
LANGUAGE										
MOBILITY										
SOCIETAL PERCEPTIONS										

incompatibilities and elements, which serve as a basis for an instructional program which improves the performance of minority disadvantaged children, protect their rights, and provide for equality of educational opportunity. Although the research focused principally on Mexican-Americans, inferences can be drawn for most disadvantaged students irrespective of the language barrier. For example, children of migrant workers, low-income Blacks and Appalachian students' dialectic concerns.

On the other hand, the work of Ronald Edmonds (1979) in the area of "Effective Schools" may well provide some insight into what can be done to improve public education. According to Edmonds, the five variables which consistently characterize instructionally effective schools are:

1. Strong Administrative Leadership
2. High Expectations
3. Clear School Mission with an Emphasis Upon Basic Skills
4. Frequent Monitoring of Pupil Progress
5. Safe and Orderly Environment

It seems to the writers that it is hard to disagree with the aforementioned characteristics of effective schools. It is the view of the writers that if these characteristics were indeed present in all schools, instructional programs would be designed to meet the needs of students. The writers cite the work done by Marva Collins in Chicago as an example that the needs of students can be met (Schneider, 1981).

It is only by carefully designing, implementing and evaluating instructional programs that the negative effects of ability grouping, student misplacement, and resegregation can be avoided.

Tracking, or ability grouping, is said to be the most frequently used technique which contributes to the dehumanization of students. The controversy surrounding ability grouping based on intelligence testing revolves around the fact that grouping students according to test results may well have a detrimental effect on students by fixing them with labels. Educators need to be concerned when the following exist in their school district:

1. Student placement in tracks within the schools correspond significantly to class and race;
2. Track assignments do not permit the students to move from lower to higher tracks; and
3. The standardized tests used to classify students are not appropriate for the majority of the black and poor white students in that the norm (the reference group) had been primarily white-middle class.

Futuristic Outlook

Throughout the remainder of this seemingly changing decade, educational leaders must provide more instructive counsel and sage advice that has a direct bearing on curriculum and student matching without the negative effects of testing. The call must go out to all concerned people, for educators cannot carry the burden alone. But educators must provide insightful leadership in redefining and clarifying goals and priorities, while concomittantly muting out irrelevant past practices in education, and advancing proven curricular paradigms in education. It goes without saying that these individuals must demonstrate unusual vision and be able to keep things in meaningful juxtaposition. Educators can ill-afford to have the negative ebbs and flows of the past decade(s), which have systematically ended in our seemingly current state of perceived complacency.

The future must hold for our students, dreams and aspirations that are a reflection of the school's curriculum, together with positive sociological experiences, accrued from their meaningful interaction with our great institutions. Our students must be taught to continually probe, analyze, and synthesize the contemporary and future problems of our time, and come up with workable solutions.

If we are to change the trend of public lack of confidence in the schools, as alluded to in recent Gallup Polls, then our educational institutions must be in the forefront of that effort. To the writers, the eighties must be envisioned as an era of promise and hope; a period of revitalization and renewal for all educational institutions. We can hypothesize and test in light of those hypotheses, but the proof will be in the unfolding of events. Then, educational judgment can be assessed. Nevertheless, a contemporary barometer reading on the mood of society, suggests the likelihood that the eighties will be highlighted by a re-ordering of educational priorities in the United States.

It is revolutionary, to say the least, to translate our speculation into meaningful need oriented curriculae. Surely, it questions our conceptualization of what we have been taught and questions the "scholars," as well as our personal convictions, competence, and profession. Perhaps, in the recognition of our educational system's shortcomings, we would do best by applying the following thought to education. "If error is corrected whenever it is recognized as such, the path of error is the path of truth" (Hans Reichenbach).

Even so, if we are to provide the necessary leadership, then we, must continually assess ourselves and re-think our goals as educators as well as individuals in this decade which is upon us. We have little choice, least we contribute to the already serious erosion of public confidence in our schools.

Likewise, the public of this nation must understand, there are no magic formulae, and we provide no utopias. Similarly, educators must be sensitive to the cries of the public who are saying, generate, test and redefine knowledge, rather than only imposing strategies which bandage our nation's educational wounds. Schools must be responsive to students and the community of which they are part. Students are the future society, ..."just as they must be responsive to the exigencies of their own existence" (Goodlad, 1976, p. 2).

Curricular Recommendations

With the aforementioned in mind, we must recognize that some curricular matching models and practices do appear to be more promising than others. In this sense we can, without being dogmatic, recommend some strategies/techniques/procedures that would be generally applicable.

1. Designing of instructional systems that stress the a priori importance of each student learner's characteristics, when selecting the objectives, materials, procedures and time parameters.
2. Educational leaders must adopt the ideology of acting in the spirit of noblesse oblige, thus assuming (as did the English gentry), responsibility for the maintenance of high quality education, and proper community, political, educational stability. Accordingly, this is representative of Horace Mann's attitude toward schooling, though disputed by others, accentuated by John Dewey and James Conant ("whole-child") to some degree, in order to provide a learning forum for students.
3. Curriculum experiences and students must be looked at on equal terms and mutually supportive of each other.

4. The current post-Brown phenomenon needs to continue to be impacted by improving the quality of education where students are situated, i.e., segregated and desegregated settings, with careful analyses of the creation, selection, revision, preparation, evaluation, and retainment of instructional materials.
5. Educational leaders should not become discouraged, lest we become cynical. We must, with the strength of rational insight, find the "means" to instill and maintain a momentum for needed educational change.

Conclusions

In conclusion, educators and community must act in concert, with the courage and perseverance to champion curricular matching without negative testing effects, and force school boards, universities, and related organizations, to design, implement, and evaluate the consequences of educational decisions. We must not let the forward progress of education wane. Unless we brave these insuperable odds, then the results will be a crippled nation.

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